

Arizona Invasive Species Advisory Council

Research & Information Management Working Group

Thursday, September 20, 2007 Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Meeting Minutes:

Co-lead Kai Umeda opened the Research and Information Management work group meeting held at the University of Arizona Maricopa County Cooperative Extension office in the Palo Verde Room, located at 4341 E. Broadway Rd, Phoenix 85040, at 8:35 am and talked about the objectives for the upcoming meeting.

Kai requested the work group to review the September 13, 2007 meeting minutes and asked for a motion to approve. Chasa O'Brien offered the motion, seconded by Fred Amator. The minutes were approved unanimously with identified edits.

Management Plan Objective 6: Research Needs and Coordination

Kai directed the group to look at the draft management plan, and discussed the need to supplement some of the recommendations under Objective 6 with some additional information based on his review of the FICNMEW document:

- Be prepared to anticipate, discover and identify invasive organisms
- Be able to conduct rapid assessment of invasive organisms
- Be able to rapidly respond to or eliminate the invasive organism

The group discussed the need to identify how surveyed people will be notified. Perhaps create a preliminary list, and the Center can maintain and update the list. It's a two way street such that these experts will report new findings as well as offer to engage in research. The process owner would be the Center, and the list of contacted individuals could be published on a Center Web site. The Web master would be responsible for soliciting input from experts (database of expertise). Verification of individuals identified as experts would need to occur. This database (list) would serve not only as a list of experts to solicit information from to create a list to solicit a list of species for which to identify and prioritize research needs, but also to serve as a directory from which to draw expertise when needed for things such as species verification etc. This list can also be used by the anticipation and control and management groups.

Identification of experts to contact regarding verification of specimens could be coordinated through the Web master.

Chasa indicated it might be important to have both a passive and an active recruitment for the list. On the web site have a comment/sign-up form that will help to continue to build the list. This list could be combined with the directory the Leadership &

coordination group is recommending to create a database which could in turn house the following: subject matter experts, interested parties. Within the database, people flagged as coordinators, subject matter experts, Agency contacts, interested parties etc. The web form could be set up such that individuals describe their level of expertise and or interest (self-select the category they would fall into). There would be a need to ensure there is quality control to weed out the self proclaimed experts. The Center will need to oversee/approve this qualification process. As such the database could also be used to create a distribution list for news letters, alerts, etc. and serve in a multi-functional capacity.

The comment-sign up form could also be a way for interested parties to sign up to receive a newsletter (electronic).

Kai indicated an example of this type of Web-based comment form is used by the U of A SAHRA which has an online news clipping service that deals specific with water issues and sends out water related news information to subscribers.

The Stop Aquatic Hitch Hikers Web site also has a list serv. Anyone can access and sign up.

Ed Northam expressed the need to have a list that is more detailed than the directory developed by the Leadership & Coordination group - that identifies subject matter experts.

Glenn Fahringer suggested the concept of having a training/certification process might be necessary to ensure that individuals on the Expert list are knowledgeable to help train experts and also increase awareness.

Recommendation: A function of the Center would be to disseminate invasive species related information in a timely manner on a regular basis.

The group reviewed Recommendation 13 and decided it should be re-written such that creation of a list of experts is the first point made in the recommendation. Also, add entomology, plant pathology, human epidemiology, animals, weeds, vertebrate....Kai will add in the disciplines to the management plan draft for this recommendation. Anyone with additional areas will send them to Kai (Riparian council).

Recommendation: Add inter tribal council to the list of participants for the Workshop/research needs prioritization.

Management Plan Objectives 8 and 9: Information Management

Kai discussed the NPDN (National Plant Disease Network) web site which promotes coordination among agencies to establish different levels of detection capabilities. He indicated that this is what is needed for the Center, and that the group needs to identify who the appropriate process owner would be.

The group identified that an existing information framework will be required to support whatever type of information and data management system is identified. The Universities, Arizona Department of Agriculture, and Arizona Game and Fish are potential process owners. Chris Trask indicated that the original AISAC Council recommended the U of A Cooperative Extension Office as the most suitable process owner data and information management sharing. The objective of such a system will be collection, coordination, and dissemination of information. Kai indicated that the Group should check with Al Fournier to determine if he felt the Extension would have the capabilities and resources to undertake such a task (add as process owner for implementation matrix). At the last meeting Al indicated that it would likely be possible, however more funding would be required primarily to go towards hiring additional employees.

Recommendation: Clarify the existing recommendation to clearly state that the FTE dedicated as a Web administrator will be an additional FTE, not an existing FTE.

A coordinated, up-to-date information management sharing system is critical component of a state-wide invasive species management plan. Information management is a crosscutting issue that affects multiple aspects of an invasive species management plan.

The types of data the center would be engaged in collecting, categorizing, and disseminating include:

- Maps
- Species identification
- Treatment methods
- Reports and published information

In discussing the various models for data collection, management and dissemination, the comment was made to perhaps to just take on the SWEMP database since there are no plans for it to be updated in the future. SWEMP is a database that could be funneled in to a spatial mapping database, still leaving a need to have some sort of spatial analysis tool. The other option is to do something similar to AZ Firemap.

Recommendation: Any data needs to be accessible, should be made available via the Web. Whatever the product is, it needs to be usable by many users. The system also needs to be updatable. A good model is the HDMS (Heritage Data Management System) which is online and available for anyone to query presence of species of special status.

The group discussed the possibility of merging SWEMP with the HDMS and piggyback on to HDMS by adding an invasive species function.

There was concern with adding to HDMS because it's private...and there is a need to make invasive species information available for dissemination. From a land

management perspective it would be interesting to have the databases housed together to make the connection between the impacts of invasive species on special status species. The system has both plants and animals. Bill Werner asked that the potential to add records to HDMS would be...can it be tripled. How much data can the system support? Marianne will talk with Sabra Schwartz the HDMS Manager, and also try to find out if Game and Fish is interested in potentially including the invasive species database and mapping functionality with the HDMS model. Chasa did not think it an invasive species component could be housed at AGFD because of the purview of components not overviewed by AGFD.

The group discussed the labor recourses needed to support a centralized invasive species information management system and decided a program manager would be needed to supervise a database manager and a Web manager. This program manager would oversee web site design and maintenance, customer service; find funding for the positions he/she oversees, coordinates and disseminates newsletters and other notices, and coordinate with invasive species experts.

Manager description: The Information Manager position will require someone like Al Fournier who will be responsible for hiring a database manager, and a web manager. This person needs to have management experience with a background in biology/ecology and IT knowledge.

Recommendation: Information management program manager must be hired. This person will have knowledge of and experience in developing spatial databases and web management, supervision, and knowledge of biology and invasive species.

The Information Manager will be tasked with identifying the most suitable information management model and then continue to seek out and add the databases.

The group reviewed the 2006 Research and Information Management work group report to the first AISAC Council and concluded that group had already done a comprehensive job of identifying the most appropriate models for data management and that they would adopt those recommendations as well for this management plan. Brian Moorhead will take recommended action III from page 5 of previous report and incorporate them into the current management plan draft.

Kai asked for concurrence that the critical element for Objectives 8 & 9 is getting the information network built. The group agreed.

Recommendation: Design, initiate and incorporate existing information systems into an AZ invasive species information system that includes the needs of all partners and participants, and where feasible, includes entities in other states and countries. The HDMS system is a suggested template.

Brian Moorhead will incorporate the previous R&IM report into the draft management plan Objectives 8 & 9. Supplement the potential models listed in the previous document with NPDM and ACIS as well as HDMS, and APHIS.

Management Plan Objective 7: Granting Framework

Kai identified the difference between funding and grants. Funding refers to money that will support the center, and grants are awarded externally to support projects. Ed Northam has been reviewing potential invasive species grant opportunities.

Grants dollars available for invasive species are generally in the following categories:

Research

Practical application

Education and information exchange

Many of the grants are very specific to certain areas of interest, or location. Some are specifically aquatic, or terrestrial, or wild lands; a narrow framework. Someone needs to review the lists of granting opportunities and identify which are best suited to external applicants.

There is a need to set up a method for identifying various types of grants and providing applicants a way to tap into these grants. The Center could serve as a resource for applicants to get information on existing grant opportunities and find out which grants would best match with their areas of interest.

Recommendation: The Center should create and maintain a list to evaluate all existing invasive species related granting opportunities, categorize this list and pertinence to AZ invasive species.

Fred Amator asked if these grants could support staff in the Center. Ed indicated that most of the grants are limited from 1-3 years, and once a particular grant has been used, often the applicant cannot reapply for several years. Therefore using grants to fund positions are very unstable and the most effective way to support critical positions.

The group discussed whether there would be an opportunity to find appropriated dollars to set up a granting program? Bill Werner indicated one of the most useful places to use state dollars is as match; this would need to be grant monies appropriated from legislature.

Who is eligible to receive certain grant monies is typically constrained by statute. For AGFD grants, for example, WCF (Wildlife Conservation Fund) is only available for non-profit and non Federal Government agencies. In contrast, the Water Protection Fund can be any entity.

Recommendation: Do not restrict who can apply for Center grants. Make it open to any entity, and leave room to restrict eligibility in the future if needed. Awarding criteria of grants should be guided by the list or prioritized research needs detailed in Management Plan Objective 6.

Marianne Meding outlined 4 alternative grant frameworks:

- A. If a pot of money is available for granting, then applicants apply for the funding based on criteria identified by the Center, or the Council.
- B. If a pot of money is available, applicants apply to use the money as match for other grants. Typically match must be awarded and guaranteed before other granting entities will consider use of the match. Match funding would be comprised of separate dollars to grant to investigators. Therefore the applicant would have to submit a proposal to both the granting agency as well as the Center.
- C. Combination of A & B.
- D. No pot of funding is available to the Center for to award grants, so instead the Center provides 'grant facilitators' who assist applicants by identifying suitable granting opportunities for external applicants and assists them in applying for these grants.

Bill asked how much funding is currently available for research. Kai indicated that it might be of more benefit to researchers to have someone to assist in applying for exiting grant opportunities rather than creating yet another grant program.

Bill agreed that it's a useful concept but also agreed that would be useful to have additional dollars available.

Glenn offered that it might be best to leave the decision of what the grant program structure should be to the grant coordinator who is hired. So the recommendation would be to hire a grant coordinator and let that person develop what the grant program should be. Or, let the Council decide what the best alternative is and then make a recommendation to the Governor.

Fred indicated that this group needs to make a recommendation and ask for hard money.

A general question was posed: Can an invasive species grant program be funded by appropriation? Fees? Taxes?

There may potential to fund a grant coordinator position on interest from a grant...legacy fund concept.

Options:

Create a foundation approach.

Legislative appropriations – tax dollars, stamps

Kai reviewed an approach taken for Lettuce and Citrus research – the growers impose a 5 cent tax on each box of citrus or lettuce and that money is used to fund research in those areas.

In a similar way, boaters, hunters, hikers, campers, pet trade etc. should perhaps all be taxed and a portion of that money go towards an invasive species grant.

Marianne asked group to review the recommendations already outlined for management plan Objective 7:

The following edits will be made:

- Remove recommendations 21 & 22 – instead make a recommendation for legislation to appropriate funds to create a grant program.
- There need to be 2 separate requests to legislature for appropriation: one for overhead, a second for a grant program. Don't want these 2 line items to be tied.
- Combine 23 with the recommendation for appropriation of money for a grant. Get rid of control.
- Add Recommendation: Employ Grant coordinator who will administer a Center for Invasive Species grant program and facilitate applicants in obtaining external grants.
- Add Recommendation: Earmark a pool of money that is available for rapid response. Emphasize the need for flexibility.
- Recommendation 29 will be incorporated into 24
- Ability to address multiple year projects ...Short term and multiple year projects will be funded. Keep grant awarding flexible.
- Add Recommendation: An alternative to State legislative appropriation is that individual states lobby at the national level to get funding to do invasive species work. These funds could be earmarked for specific states. Such action would need to go through our legislature.
- Council could host state legislatures and educate and inform them on invasive species issues. Do this on an annual basis.

- State of Arizona should designate an Invasive Species Awareness Week.

Chris asked if there should be a clause regarding intellectual property? Concern centered on development of new management treatments and potential patents - more in the case of products (techniques, chemicals), and not published literature. The group agreed that is an issue and needs to be addressed when the grant agreement and reporting criteria are set up.

Additional consideration needs to be given to the following:

- For awarded grants, what will the overhead restriction be? This will need to be decided at the policy level.
- Where are there opportunities to make suggestions to existing programs? As an example, the Weed Science Society working with NRI (National Research Initiatives) to have NRI grants include invasive weed applications is included in rfps.

Center for Invasive Species Structure and Funding:

Glen recommended that the Center needs to be a stand alone entity. The group discussed a range of alternatives, and decided a stand alone center would be most desirable; however, additional alternatives need to be outlined.

Recommendation: The base of the center needs to be funded by appropriated dollars to ensure longevity and sustainability. The will need to be a stepped up budget to account for an increase in invasive species issues, inflation, etc.

Recommendation: There needs to be a funded Center manager.

Could explore the endowment alternative.

View the Center as an invasive species project that runs individual programs within the larger center. These grants could be used to fund Center programs. The funding for a center should come from solid money so that the Center can be sustained for a long period.

Make a recommendation that the center not be dependant on soft dollars.

Research Needs Prioritization Process (Management Plan Objective 6):

Chasa asked the group to review the prioritization scoring key she developed. She and Kai indicated that there are several additional models available, and asked the group to provide comments. The group briefly reviewed the scoring key and indicated they felt it looked appropriate at first glance.

The group discussed the need to have a group meeting on Sept 27 and decided to cancel the meeting. Kai, Marianne, Ed, Brian McGrew and Brian Moorhead will meet to work on the Implementation Matrix.

Action Items:

1. Kai is going to make the changes to Objective 6 and incorporate his process and list criteria for research needs and priorities.
2. I will make edits to Objective 7 and will touch base with Ed with any questions.
3. Brian Moorhead will incorporate pages 5 and 6 from the previous research and information management group report in 2006.
4. If you could please have your edits to Marianne by Tuesday of next week that would be great so that I can get the draft plan sent to the Council for review.

Meeting adjourned 11:50 am.